

## Using Safe Food Handling Labels

Even experienced shoppers and cooks need a little **extra** guidance in handling meat and poultry products.

Why? Because animal products can contain harmful bacteria.

But if you know **HOW** to safely refrigerate, prepare, cook and store these foods, you and your family can stay healthy.

Read the new safe food handling labels on meat and poultry:

- To be a smarter consumer.
- To make safe food handling a part of regular meal preparation.
- To protect everyone who eats your food.

### The New Safe Food Handling Labels Cover

- Storing meat and poultry
- Preventing the spread of bacteria from one food to another
- Cooking meat and poultry thoroughly
- Handling leftovers.

### LOOK FOR the New Safe Food Handling Labels on

All raw and partially precooked meat and poultry products. This means any product that is not ready to eat when you buy it.

- Raw products like chicken legs, hamburger, roasts, whole turkey and frozen chicken breasts will have safe handling labels.
- Partially cooked or char-marked items like hamburger patties with grill marks, breaded chopped steaks and pork patties will have these labels too.

## The "Whys" Behind the Safe Food Handling Labels

### Store and Thaw Safely

Refrigerate or freeze meat and poultry the minute you get home from the store. Most foodborne bacteria only grow slowly at 40° F or below – a safe refrigerator temperature. Freezer temperatures of 0° F or below stop bacteria growth.

Thawing food on the kitchen counter is risky because foodborne bacteria can multiply rapidly at room temperatures. Thaw in the refrigerator or microwave. When you thaw food in the microwave, cook it right away.

### Cook Thoroughly

Cooking food all the way through is the single best protection you have against foodborne illness. To avoid tough, dry meat - do not over cook.

Use the temperatures in the chart (backside) for safe, juicy meats.



When you're not using a thermometer, look carefully at meat products before you serve them. Ground meat and poultry should be gray in the middle. For whole birds and poultry pieces, the juices should run clear.

For larger size red meats like roasts, the surface should be well browned, but they may look slightly pink in the middle. However, if you have cut into the meat with a knife (scoring) or poked it with a fork to tenderize it (which exposes the interior to bacteria), cook the meat to medium or well done.

Why is a large, unpierced cut of meat safe to eat when the center is left pink, while ground meat must be cooked until pink color has disappeared? When meat is ground, bacteria is mixed throughout the meat. Thorough cooking is required to make sure all the bacteria has been killed.

### Don't Spread Bacteria In the Kitchen

Keep raw meat, poultry and their juices away from other food.

- For example, don't chop salad vegetables on a cutting board where you've just had raw meat or poultry.
- At the grill, take a clean platter to serve cooked meat, not the "bloody" platter you used for the uncooked meat.

ALWAYS wash your cutting board, utensils, counter, sink and hands with hot, soapy water after contact with raw meat or poultry.

### Handling Leftovers

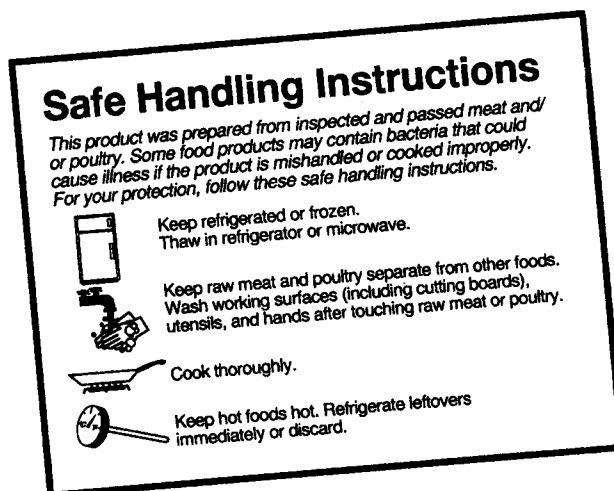
Bacteria and other pathogens are always present to endanger your food. Perishable food must be kept HOT (140°F and above) or COLD (40° or lower) to keep bacteria from growing.

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours after cooking or serving. Divide leftovers into small refrigerator containers for safe, quick cooling. Discard any food left out too long.

## Cooking Temperatures\*

Product	Temperature (Fahrenheit)
<b>Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb</b>	
Ground Products like hamburger (prepared as patties, meat loaf, meatballs, etc.)	160
Roasts, steaks and chops	160
Medium Rare	145
Medium	160
Well Done	170
<b>Fresh Pork</b>	
All cuts including ground product	
Medium	160
Well Done	170
<b>Poultry</b>	
Ground chicken, turkey	165
Whole chicken, turkey	
Medium, unstuffed	170
Well Done	180
Whole bird with stuffing (Stuffing must reach 165°F)	180
Poultry breasts, roasts	170
thighs, wings	Cook until juices run clear
<b>Ham</b>	
Fresh (raw)	160
Fully cooked, to reheat	140

\* These are the temperatures meat should get to in the center to be safe to eat.



Adapted from:  
A Quick Consumer Guide to Safe Food Handling Labels  
H&G Bulletin No. 254, Food Safety Inspection Service USDA